



Date: 8th September 2022

To: IRB club instructors

From: Scott Weatherall – National Health & Safety Advisor

Subject: **SAFETY ALERT – IRB CREWPERSON POSITION**

Greetings IRB instructors,

Last weekend we were advised of a IRB crewperson injury to a young surf lifeguard who had been training to gain their IRB crewperson module. This injury resulted in the member fracturing their right ankle and requiring surgery.

Through our accident investigation process, it has been made clear the lifeguard was not clearly communicated or instructed on the correct position of their right foot while crewing the IRB in flat water or the wave zone.

We also found that when the incident occurred the lifeguard was holding the black boarding handgrip with the right hand (used to board the IRB) as opposed the crewing handgrip (white rope covered with yellow heat shrink) held by the right hand once the IRB is underway.

This is a timely reminder as we head into our summer season to please be extra vigilant and clear when instructing any surf lifeguards in IRB skills and preparing them for the IRB Crewperson Module.

The full IRB training manual can be viewed here;
<https://www.surflifesaving.org.nz/lifesaving/lifesaving-resources>. For specific crewperson positioning in the IRB please see the following pages from the training manual.

We want to continue to learn from these accidents and prevent them in the future wherever possible. In a wider IRB project, we are investigating and trialing different IRB foot straps and developing new IRB trainee and instructor videos to help support the learning and teaching of our IRB crewperson and driver lifeguards. If you have any thoughts or feedback please feel to reach out

Yours sincerely

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In it for life

Crewperson skills

Launching the IRB - crewperson

- When the IRB is situated in the correct water depth for launching it is the crewperson's responsibility to ensure the IRB is held securely into oncoming waves. For safety reasons the crewperson should be facing the surf. **F5**
- The driver will board the IRB and start the engine. **F5**
- The driver will instruct the crewperson when to board the IRB. The crewperson will board the IRB using the crewpersons' boarding handgrip and bow rope. Alternatively, the crewperson may board by securing the boarding handgrip with the right hand and using the left arm as a lever on the pontoon.

Basic crewing position

Below is the basic positioning for a crewperson in flat conditions with a level IRB:

- The crewperson should be seated on the starboard (right) side of the IRB near the bow. **F6**
- The crewperson should hold the bow rope with their left hand and the crewperson's handgrip with the right. **F7**
- The left foot should be secured into the crewperson's left foot strap. **F8**
- Care should be taken to insure the footstrap is adjusted to fit the individual, ensuring it fits snug over the forefoot, while allowing the foot to flex during impact. **F9**
- The crewperson should ensure three points of contact with the IRB to maintain position and balance.



IMPORTANT:

When proceeding through surf do not grab the bow black handle to "punch" through a wave. This will cause injury. **F10**

Proceeding through surf

- The crewperson plays a very important part in maintaining the balance of the IRB when negotiating surf. Correct technique is required when impacting large waves to minimise the risk of injury, and to ensure the IRB successfully negotiates the surf.
- As the IRB rises over a large broken or green wave the weight of the crewperson should be centred over the starboard (right) pontoon. The crewperson must lean forward over the pontoon with their chest to help negate bow rise. **F11**
- It is very important the crewperson maintains a strong grip with their right hand on the crewperson hand grip and their left foot secured in the foot strap. The left hand should hold the bow rope on impact.
- As the IRB bow begins to drop after impact of a wave, the crewperson will take the shock of the impact through both (bent) legs.
- As the IRB impacts a small broken or green wave the crewperson should remain seated on the starboard **F12** pontoon, while leaning forward to help negate bow rise.

Parallel running – crewperson

In many rescue situations we are required to move from point to point on the beach or coastline at speed. The most effective way to perform this task is to manoeuvre the IRB along the beach/coastline parallel to the beach – parallel running.

The role of the crewperson when parallel running is to keep the IRB as balanced as possible, while scanning the sea to avoid swimmers or surfers moving out through the surf line.

When parallel running with the crewperson on the seaward side, balance the IRB by leaning into the wave. **F13**

If the crewperson is on the beach side of the IRB they may need to lean into the middle of the IRB to keep it balanced when a wave hits.

Returning to shore

When returning to shore the crewperson should direct the passage of the IRB by hand signals supplemented by verbal signals. However in all cases the final decision is the driver's.

The crewperson should constantly scan the sea to avoid swimmers, surfers, seaweed, fishing lines and other hazards. **F14**

When the driver gives the command "Out", the crewperson should jump out of the IRB with the driver and hold the IRB facing toward the beach so any following wave will push the IRB straight up the beach.

